



FACT SHEET

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VirginiaDOT.org

“It Could Happen To You - Hurricane Facts”

What is a Hurricane?

Hurricanes are huge tropical storms that move in a counterclockwise spiral and form in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the Caribbean Sea, the Gulf of Mexico, or the southern Atlantic Ocean. The storm's calm center, called an eye, is about 20 to 30 miles wide. The storm around the eye can extend outward 400 miles with winds in excess of 74 mph. The Atlantic hurricane season runs from **June through November**. During that period, the eastern part of Virginia is especially at risk for a major storm. The best defense against the danger and destruction caused by hurricanes is preparedness. It's important to know what to do before, during, and after a hurricane.

If a **hurricane watch** has been issued for your area, conditions are favorable for and could produce a hurricane. Listen to the news and the weather updates and make sure you leave if an official evacuation is ordered. Cover your windows with hurricane shutters or plywood. Taping windows offers little or no protection against high winds. If a **hurricane warning** has been issued, a violent storm, possibly a hurricane, is expected within 24 hours.

What should I do to prepare for a Hurricane? Key steps in preparing for a hurricane prior to the storm:

- Prepare a Disaster Plan for your family. Important issues to discuss are; evacuation, supplies, emergency contacts, and shelter information. Advance preparation requires families to work together as a team. Discuss the types of emergencies that are most likely to happen and what to do in each case, such as loss of electricity, flooding, and pet care. Post this information where everyone can locate it quickly such as the refrigerator.
- Locate local shelters, and know how to get there before the evacuation order is issued.
- Prepare a Disaster Supply Kit with the items that your family will need to survive in a shelter or temporary housing for five to seven days.
- Know your evacuation route and remember that some interstates, bridges and tunnels are closed during a hurricane.
- Family members can become separated during a hurricane. Be prepared by creating a plan for how to reach one another. Establish an out-of-area contact (such as a relative or family friend) who can coordinate family members' locations and information should you become separated. Make sure children learn the phone numbers and addresses, and know the emergency plans.
- Find out about the disaster plans at your workplace, your children's school or daycare center, your community and other places where you or your family spend time.

What do I put in a Disaster Supply Kit?

Include items your family will need to survive in a shelter or temporary housing. Some of these items are; water, non-perishable food, seasonal sturdy clothing, medication, first aid kit, blankets/ pillows, special items – for babies and elderly, toiletries – hygiene items, moisture wipes, flashlight/batteries, radio- battery-operated, NOAA Weather Radio, cash, keys- Extra set of home and car keys, important documents in a waterproof container such as; Insurance, medical records, bank account numbers, Social Security card, etc., toys/books/entertainment, tools, Remember to fuel your vehicle with gasoline. Also, don't forget pet care items such as food, water, medication and a pet carrier.

When should I evacuate?

You should tune into your local media for instructions about when to evacuate. Your local government will order an evacuation when it is time to leave. Key factors in evacuation decision making include:

- Providing enough time for people in storm surge zones and mobile homes to leave before the arrival of 39 mph winds;
- Selecting an appropriate evacuation time to allow citizens to get to safety during daylight hours; and providing the news media with enough time to warn the greatest number of people.

If you are evacuated, take your [family disaster supplies kit](#) and leave immediately. You have several choices for your evacuation destination. You can go to a hotel or motel outside the storm surge zones, the home of family or friends, or a public shelter. Shelter space may be limited and not all shelters accept pets.

What should I know about evacuation routes?

First, you should know whether or not you live in a vulnerable area (i.e.: a mobile home, an area that frequently floods, or near the coast or bay). If you aren't sure, contact your local Department of Emergency Management at: www.vaemergency.com If you do not feel comfortable staying where you are, and feel the need to evacuate, go. But have a plan in place before you leave. It is better to leave your home before an evacuation is called for.

What should I do if I'm ordered not to evacuate?

If you are not ordered to evacuate, find shelter in your home. The safest place during a hurricane is an interior room without windows. Get your home and yard ready for a hurricane by installing hurricane shutters; removing dead and diseased trees and branches; securing large items outside or bringing them into your home; cleaning rain gutters, outside stairwells, window wells, drain lines, and downspouts.

- Remain inside, away from windows and doors.
- During power outages try to avoid carrying a lit candle. Use flashlights instead. Don't use a lit candle when searching for items in a confined space. Never use a candle for a light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment such as a kerosene heater or lantern. The flame may ignite the fumes. Read NFPA's [candle safety fact sheet](#).
- Do not be fooled by the calm when the eye of the hurricane is above your area; the worst of the storm is probably yet to come.
- Be prepared for [tornadoes](#) caused by hurricanes; remain inside and at the center of your home or in a closet or basement.

Continue to listen to the news and weather updates. Often when the storm is over, danger still exists from floods, downed power lines, and electrically charged water. Stay out of buildings that have been damaged or flooded and obey detour and warning signs when driving. Never enter flooded or barricaded roadways (even with a large vehicle). Vehicles can be swept away by only two feet of water.

What is a Lane Reversal?

In coordination with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Virginia State Police and Virginia National Guard, a lane reversal plan for I-64 has been developed. This lane reversal plan is designed to use all Interstate 64 lanes west of the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to evacuate traffic heading west toward I-295 in Richmond. In the event of a very severe hurricane (category 4 or 5), the Governor will strongly consider calling for a reversal of I-64 from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to the I-295 interchange in Richmond. This means that the eastbound lanes of I-64, from the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel to the I-295 interchange in Richmond will be reversed to help evacuate more people.

For more information visit us online: www.VirginiaDOT.gov. To order your free copy of the Hurricane Guide - <http://www.virginiadot.org/info/service/is-hurricane.asp>